



Giving experience

RESEARCH STUDY

5TH EDITION

Social donor insights to inspire generosity

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Introduction

Social giving has long been viewed as an opportunity to attract new donors, and many nonprofits feel it's a struggle to keep those new supporters engaged for the long term. But the varied methods of generosity that make up social giving can accomplish so much more!

It isn't just about the initial connection—social giving can serve as a gateway for deeper donor relationships, a source of community for your most loyal supporters, and a way to reignite a passion for your mission in lapsed donors.

As nonprofits continue to adapt to changing donor expectations, one thing is clear: social giving is constantly evolving.

Younger and more diverse donors have become a driving force in this space, demanding inclusivity, accessibility, immediacy, and opportunities to witness the direct impact of their contributions. While overall social giving participation has settled back to pre-pandemic levels, these donor groups offer fresh potential to grow and strengthen nonprofits' communities of support.

In the 5th edition of the giving experience study, we take a deep dive into what motivates today's social donors to give and what keeps them coming back. We surveyed 1,036 social donors to understand the key factors driving their generosity—like ease of giving, alignment with a nonprofit's mission, and the trust they place in organizations—and explore the rising importance of inclusivity, innovation, and urgency in shaping their decisions.

This study contains self-reported feedback directly from social donors 18 years of age or older. It focuses on the giving experiences of social donors who:

- Donated to or attended a fundraising event like a gala, golf tournament, or similar event,
- Donated to, bid during, or attended a nonprofit auction,
- Sponsored someone or participated in a peer-to-peer fundraising event like a run, walk, or ride, or
- Donated or requested donations as part of a fundraising challenge, occasion, or giving day.

We're excited to share this year's findings to help you more deeply understand this unique donor segment and identify opportunities to attract, engage, and retain more of them. In this report, you'll find both the research findings and practical strategies to meet social donor expectations, embrace changing patterns of social donor generosity, and build lasting relationships that drive impact.





Key findings

Generosity holds steady amid economic pressure

One-third of social donors reported giving more than they usually do, even amid economic uncertainty, inflation, and a slight decline in the overall social donor pool. In fact, the average event donor reported giving 15% more this year. While a small segment of donors (1 in 10) indicated they gave less than in previous years, the fact that many continued to prioritize generosity showcases resilience in the face of financial pressures. Social donors remain committed to supporting the causes they care about.

Trust, mission, and ease remain cornerstones of giving

For the third consecutive year, trust, mission, and ease have remained the top motivators for social donors. This year, 7 in 10 social donors highlighted ease of giving as a critical factor, and 6 in 10 emphasized the importance of understanding how their donations make an impact. Trust continues to be a key driver of generosity, reaffirming that nonprofits must prioritize transparency and clear communication to maintain donor confidence and loyalty. These enduring motivators demonstrate the need for nonprofits to create frictionless giving experiences while reinforcing the tangible impact of donor contributions.

Social giving broadens access to philanthropy

Social giving continues to open doors for charitable participation, especially for younger and more diverse donors. In 2024, 17% of social donors were Black and 23% were Hispanic, both higher than their representation in the general population. The inclusive and welcoming nature of social giving remains a crucial factor for younger donors and underrepresented groups, and this generosity motivator rose in importance by 10 points overall for all social donors, proving the need for accessible and community-driven fundraising opportunities.

Auction attendees highly likely to increase giving

Auction donors stand out for their loyalty and engagement, and this year's new, auction-specific data revealed these donors' strong potential for long-term engagement. Not only are auction participants among the most likely to convert to regular annual donors, but they're also more inclined to increase their giving. In fact, half of auction attendees indicated they're very likely to become annual donors, reinforcing auctions as a powerful strategy for cultivating sustained donor relationships and securing increased financial support.

Gen Z's growing financial influence and desire for impact, innovation

As Gen Z's financial capacity increases, their giving trends reflect a rising desire to see the direct impact of their donations. Nearly half of Gen Z donors said they gave in response to a current issue or need, the highest among all generations. They were also more likely than other generations to say that nonprofits' demonstration of innovation and adaptability motivated their generosity. Gen Z's average social donation amount increased this year by 10% to \$197. Since 2022, their average annual donation total has risen 130% from \$502 to \$1,155, signaling growing financial commitment to causes they care about and making them a key demographic for nonprofits seeking to make timely, real-world impact.

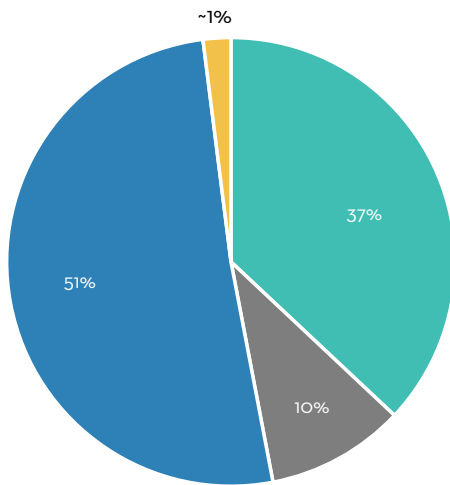
Social giving overview

This year, 20% of U.S. adults self-identified as social donors, marking a slight dip as we continue to see shifts in how people engage with giving (Figure 1). Social giving surged during the pandemic, peaking at 29% in 2022, largely due to the rise in virtual campaigns and digital engagement. By 2023, participation settled back to 23%, mirroring pre-pandemic levels last seen in 2018.

1 in 5

U.S. adults self-identify as social donors

Figure 1: Survey respondents that self-identify as social donors in relation to U.S. Census representation.



Despite a slight dip in the total percentage of social donors, and amidst worries about the widespread effects of inflation, the good news is that around a third (37%) of social donors reported giving more than they usually do (Figure 2).

■ Gave more ■ Gave less ■ Same amount ■ First year giving

Figure 2: In the last 12 months, did you donate more money than usual, less money than usual, the same amount as usual, or was it your first year giving?

Within the social donor segment, how people participated in social giving remained relatively consistent (Figure 3). Run/walk/ride events remain a favorite, with 40% of social donors taking part in these kinds of social fundraising efforts. The stability in event participation (33%) aligns with donors' continued reconnection with causes through live, in-person experiences. This year, we also asked donors about their auction participation—19% specified they donated during an auction or won an item. Giving and awareness days, occasion giving, and memorial giving all saw small participation decreases within the social donor segment.

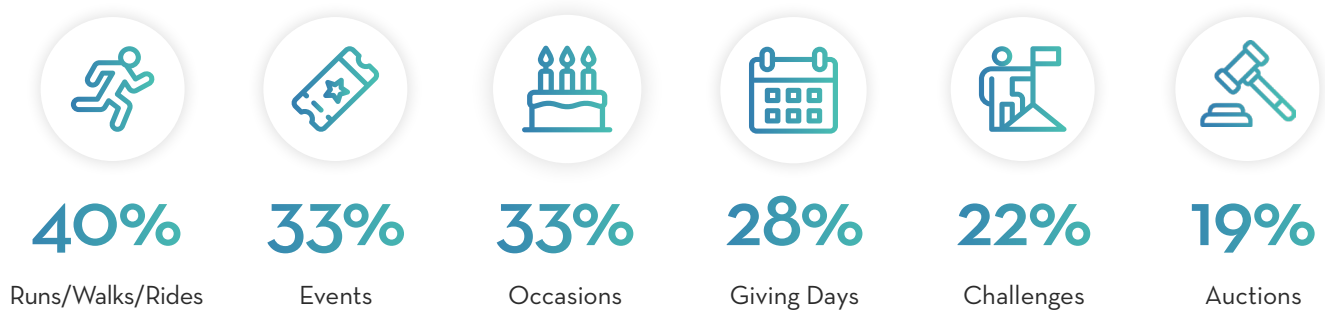


Figure 3: In the last 12 months, in which of the following ways have you supported nonprofit organizations, charities, and/or causes? (Select all that apply.)



Social giving trends

Overall participation in occasion giving and giving days by the general population saw a 5-point drop from 2023 – from 18% to 13% (Figure 4). This comes after a 3-point decline from 2022 to 2023.

Virtual campaigns during the pandemic fueled a huge boost in occasion giving in the general population, pushing participation from 12% pre-pandemic to a high of 21% during the pandemic. Now, as people continue to reconnect in person, occasion giving has lost some of its momentum as certain pandemic-era virtual habits are left behind.

Occasion giving in U.S. general population

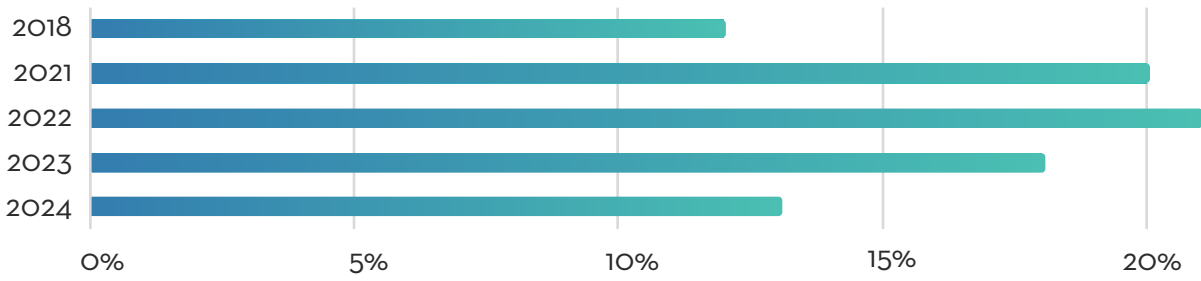


Figure 4: Rates of participation in occasion giving, giving and awareness days, and memorial giving within the general population, a longitudinal look.

On a positive note, younger donors are leaning into social giving and leading the charge when it comes to giving days in particular (Figure 4a). This group is most likely to give to current needs or make spontaneous gifts, behaviors often associated with giving and awareness day opportunities. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of Gen Z and 34% of Millennial social donors reported donating on a giving day such as GivingTuesday or during an awareness month like Black History Month, and 82% of Gen Z and 75% of Millennial social donors said that donating to a current issue or need described why they made their last social donation—compared to 62% of donors overall.

Generational giving day participation

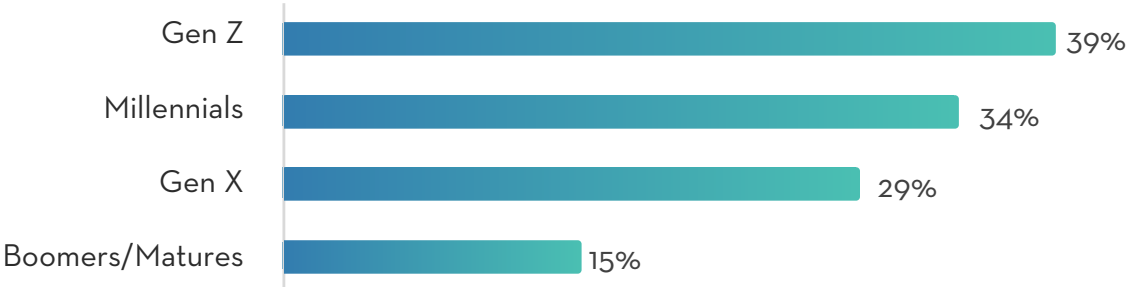


Figure 4a: Percentage of survey respondents who participated in giving days, by generation.

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

Overall, these shifts point to a gradual stabilization of social giving patterns as donors return to more traditional, in-person events, while younger generations continue to engage strongly with giving days and urgent-issue campaigns.

Social donors have shown remarkable resilience in their giving patterns despite widespread concerns about inflation's impact. While there was a slight drop in average annual donation totals (\$1,170) compared to 2023 (\$1,184), this decline is minimal and doesn't suggest a significant downturn in generosity (*Figure 5*).

When viewed in a broader context, social donors continue to give at higher levels than in 2022 (\$1,010) and 2018 (\$1,094). This demonstrates that, even in challenging economic conditions, donors remain committed to supporting the causes they care about.

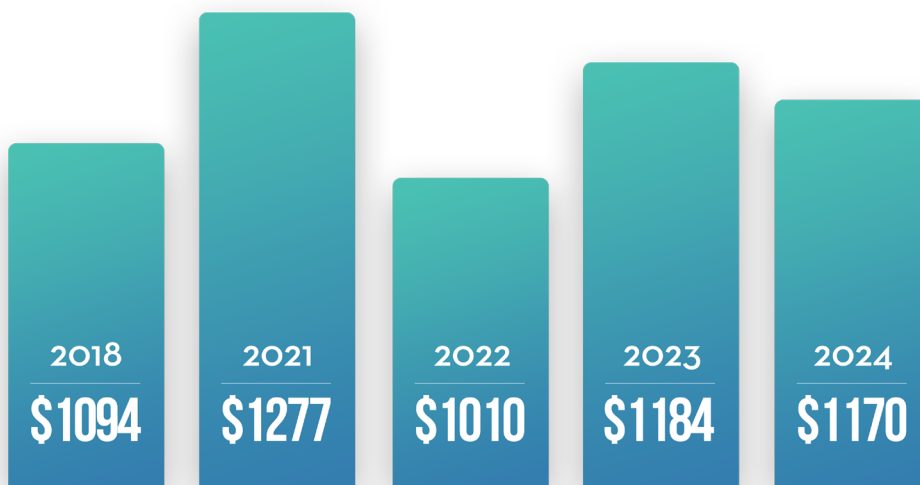


Figure 5: Average annual total donations by social donors each year of study.

In fact, the average social donation amount increased 12% to \$191 this year, suggesting that social donors are willing to invest more in the interactive experiences social giving has to offer (*Figure 5a*).

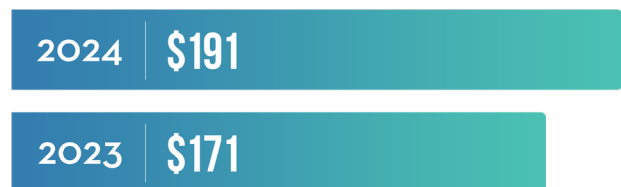


Figure 5a: Average social donation amount.

The power of social giving: Attraction, engagement & retention

After trending upward in past years, social donor loyalty amongst event and peer-to-peer donors remains steady, with 73% saying they would “definitely sponsor or participate in” another event at the same organization in the future (Figure 6).

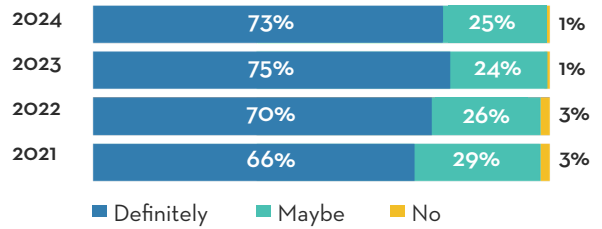


Figure 6: Combined event/peer-to-peer likelihood to continue support. In 2021, 2022, & 2024, 1% selected “Not Sure.”

Events and social giving are typically thought of as engagement activities, but they can accomplish so much more. Social giving can be an entry point for donors just getting familiar with your mission, a form of community for your loyal supporters, a stepping-off point for year-round engagement, and a way to bring lapsed donors back into the fold.

This year, 25% of social donors said the last social donation they made was the first time they had given to their chosen organization (Figure 7). Thirty-five percent (35%) were active donors who reported giving to the same organization within the past 12 months, and 37% were lapsed donors who gave again after one or more years.



Figure 7: Had you ever donated to that organization before? Excluding your most recent donation, when was the last time you donated to the organization?

There is a huge opportunity to attract new donors to your mission through social giving, and providing a frictionless giving and event experience is an important piece. In fact, 62% of first-time donors reported they were most motivated by the ease of donating, and 59% said the same about being able to give immediately, in the moment (Figure 8).



Mission, trust, and impact made up the remaining top five generosity motivators for first-time donors. Showing this group they can trust you to create tangible impact that aligns with their values is crucial to attracting – and hopefully retaining! – first-time donors through social giving.

Figure 8: Thinking about the last time you donated through social fundraising, how well do each of the following describe WHY you donated? (% reported as “describes perfectly” among first-time donors to org)

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

For social donors overall, the reasons they return to give to an organization again offer valuable insights for building long-term relationships, retention, and upgrades (*Figure 9*). Nearly three-quarters (74%) of social donors said they were very or somewhat likely to become regular annual donors, highlighting the opportunity to convert occasional givers into loyal supporters.

The top reasons social donors said they would give again include feeling like their donation makes a difference (49%), having a positive and easy donation process (39%), and knowing the organization uses funds wisely (38%). Additionally, 30% said they enjoyed the event, and 24% found the campaign or event fun, showing the importance of providing positive and engaging experiences. Inclusivity also matters, with 26% noting that a welcoming atmosphere would encourage them to give again.

By focusing on impact, ease, transparency, and creating enjoyable, inclusive experiences, nonprofits can better retain social donors and foster long-term loyalty.

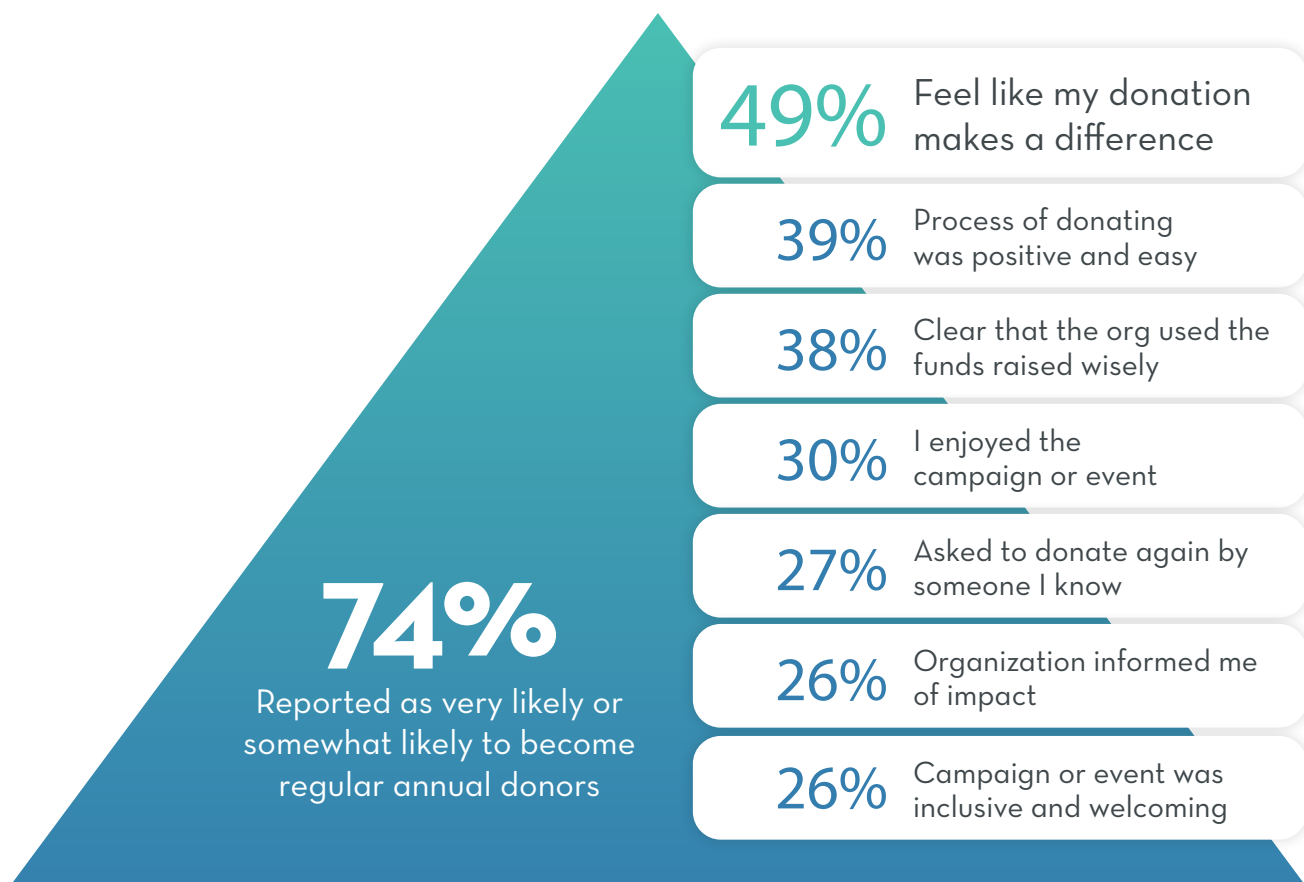


Figure 9: Which of the following impacts your decision to give to this organization or cause again? (Select all that apply.)

Social donor generosity motivators: Give them (“TIME”)

Each year, we ask social donors what motivates them to give. Ease has consistently been among the top 3 generosity motivators in each of our social donor studies, with mission, impact, and trust making appearances.

As in 2023, this year’s top 3 generosity motivators are ease, trust, and mission – all nearly tied for first place. Ease is up 8 points from 2023, and trust is up 7 points. This increase in trust as a social donor motivator is solidified by a wider rise in trust in nonprofits, as reported in a 2024 Independent Sector study¹ that found donor trust in nonprofit organizations has risen 5 points since 2023 after a notable drop in previous years.



Figure 10: Top three generosity motivators for 2024.

Being able to donate in the moment – immediacy – rose 11 points after a drop in importance in 2023 (Figure 11). Impact – knowing the money would make a difference – rounded out the top 5. Another rising motivator of interest was that the event/campaign was inclusive and welcoming, which rose 10 points from last year to 55%, which is possibly tied to more Gen Z donors participating in social giving this year.

Top 10 motivators



Figure 11: Top ten generosity motivators for 2024.

1. Independent Sector. “Trust in Nonprofits and Philanthropy.” 2024: page 7

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

When looking at the top five generosity motivators, one can think of them in terms of the acronym TIME to represent the key drivers of donor behavior and engagement: Trust, Impact, Mission, and Ease. These four elements represent fundamental pillars of the donor journey, highlighting what donors need to feel confident, connected, and inspired to give.



Figure 12: TIME: Trust, Impact, Mission, Ease

Each component plays a critical role, forming the backbone of successful donor engagement and encouraging both initial and ongoing support.

- **T**rust ensures that donors believe their contributions will be handled responsibly.
- **I**mpact reassures them that their donations will create real change.
- **M**ission connects them emotionally to the cause.
- **E**ase encompasses both the simplicity and immediacy of the giving process. It's about making donations simple *and* enabling donors to give in the moment when they're most inspired – whether through a single click or a digital wallet transaction.

The top ten generosity motivators in [Figure 11](#) aren't the only factors influencing giving. There were also changes in – and a new addition to – second-tier motivators.

More than 4 in 10 social donors gave because the organization demonstrated innovation and adaptability in addressing challenges, which was included as an option for the first time this year ([Figure 13](#)).



45%

of social donors reported being motivated to give by an organization's demonstration of innovation & adaptability

Figure 13

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

Among other second-tier generosity motivators, the number of social donors who indicated they were motivated because an event or campaign seemed like it would be fun rose 8 points to 45%. There was also a 5-point increase in donors who said they were motivated by seeing how close the the person or organization was to reaching its fundraising goal (44%).

Second-tier generosity motivators



Figure 14: Thinking about the last time you donated through social fundraising, how well do each of the following describe WHY you donated? (% reported as “describes perfectly”)

At the generational level, there’s ample opportunity to differentiate messaging and engagement tactics based on generosity motivators (Figure 15). Gen Z and Millennials notably valued innovation and adaptability more than other generations, so demonstrating how your organization is achieving impact through novel approaches could be a successful way to encourage giving with those age groups.

TOP 10 MOTIVATORS	GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BOOMERS/MATURES
1	It was easy to do	It was easy to do	Care about the mission	Trust org
2	Trust org	Care about the mission	Trust org	It was easy to do
3	Clear exactly how my donation would be used	Trust org	It was easy to do	Care about the mission
4	Care about the mission	Would make a difference	Would make a difference	Able to make a donation immediately
5	Demonstrated innovation and adaptability*	Able to make a donation immediately	Able to make a donation immediately	Would make a difference
6	Inclusive and welcoming	Inclusive and welcoming	Clear exactly how my donation would be used	Clear exactly how my donation would be used
7	Able to make a donation immediately	Clear exactly how my donation would be used	Inclusive and welcoming	Support the person who asked
8	Would make a difference	Demonstrated innovation and adaptability*	Support the person who asked	Inclusive and welcoming
9	Close to meeting their fundraising goal	Friends, colleagues, family participating	Directly impact my local community	Friends, colleagues, family participating
10	Thought would be fun	Support the person who asked	Close to meeting their fundraising goal	Directly impact my local community

Figure 15: Thinking about the last time you donated through social fundraising, how well do each of the following describe WHY you donated? (% reported as “describes perfectly,” by generation) Items with blue outline indicate significantly higher percentages than other generations. *New in 2024

Inclusive & welcoming: Social giving broadens access to philanthropy

Social giving has proven to expand access to philanthropy, particularly for younger and more diverse donors who are often under-represented in traditional giving channels. After a slight dip in the number of Gen Z and Black donors participating in social giving last year, these groups have regained lost ground, which we'll touch on below.

Additionally, certain segments of donors over-index in social giving compared to the general population. Gen Z, Millennials, Black, and Hispanic donors all represent a larger portion of the social donor pool than that of the general population, as illustrated to the right (Figure 16).

	General population	Social donor pool
Gen Z	8%	10%
Millennials	28%	35%
Black	13%	17%
Hispanic	16%	23%

Figure 16: Comparison of percentage of general population to segments who over index for social giving. *Please note: This study includes Gen Z adults 18+ due to legal restrictions around privacy & parental consent.

Gen Z	56%
Millennials	59%
Black	63%
Hispanic	61%

Motivated by inclusion

These segments also reported they were motivated by the inclusive and welcoming nature of social giving at a higher rate than the average among all segments of social donors, which was 55% (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Thinking about the last time you donated through social fundraising, how well do each of the following describe WHY you donated? (% reported "The event/campaign was inclusive & welcoming" as "describes perfectly")

Before diving too far into how things changed this year, it's helpful to see how various demographics participated in social giving. Looking at social giving by generation, Gen Z made up 10% of the sample size this year compared to 8% in 2023 (Figure 18). The sample sizes for other generations remained stable in this year's data.



Figure 18: Percent of sample size (viewed by generation)

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

Gen Z's overall engagement saw multiple increases, with their average total donation amount rising by \$291, and their social giving average donation increasing by \$19 (Figure 19). While a separate section will cover Gen Z in more detail, it's clear they're back this year and giving in response to current issues or needs, with 46% of Gen Z donors citing this motivation—a 10-point rise from 2023.

Millennials show mixed trends. Their total annual donation amount decreased slightly (-\$55), while their social giving donation average rose by \$39, suggesting that while they may be giving less overall, they're prioritizing social giving opportunities.

Gen X presents a more concerning trend with a 6-point drop to 32% of donors saying they gave to more organizations. Their overall donation total also saw a small decrease (-\$14), though their social giving average held steady.

Among Boomers/Matures, the average social giving donation rose by \$23, while their overall donation total declined slightly (-\$56). One in three Boomers/Matures reported donating more money this year, up 4 points. However, fewer gave in response to current issues, with a 4-point drop to 16%.

	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers
Annual total donation average	\$1,155	\$1,164	\$1,022	\$1,317
Social giving donation average	\$197	\$248	\$167	\$151
Donated more money	52%	43%	30%	31%
Gave to more orgs	50%	49%	32%	27%
Donated in response to a current issue or need	46%	36%	31%	16%
Top 5 nonprofit types	#1 Health charities	Health charities	Children's charities	Health charities
	#2 Children's charities	Children's charities	Animal rescue	Faith-based
	#3 Human rights	Social services	Health charities	Social services
	#4 Animal rescue	Animal rescue	Social services	Children's charities
	#5 Social service orgs	Youth development	Faith-based	Animal rescue

Figure 19: Giving behavior over the last 12 months, by generation.

In terms of what types of nonprofits each generation supports, health charities top the list for nearly all generations, reflecting a shared priority across age groups. Children's charities and animal rescue organizations also consistently rank among the top across Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers/Matures, with slight variations in rank order. Social services are particularly significant for Millennials and Gen X, while faith-based organizations have strong support among Boomers/Matures and Gen X. Human rights organizations appear in the top five for Gen Z, emphasizing this generation's distinct focus on social justice issues, while youth development is a key focus for Millennials.

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

In 2024, Black donors accounted for 17% of the social donor pool, rebounding from a dip to 10% in 2023 and approaching the 19% level seen in 2022 (*Figure 20*). Meanwhile, the proportion of Hispanic donors has steadily increased, rising from 17% in 2022 to 20% in 2023, and further climbing to 23% in 2024. AANHPI donors saw little change this year. Finally, the proportion of white/non-Hispanic donors has seen a small decrease over the years, dropping to 55% in 2024 after hovering in the 59-60% range since 2021.



Figure 20: Percent of sample size (viewed by race)

The data highlights variations in giving patterns across different demographic groups, with Hispanic donors leading in generosity. Their annual total donation average rose to \$1,427 from \$1,123 last year, while their social giving donation average increased to \$325 from \$192 (*Figure 21*). Notably, 45% of Hispanic donors gave in response to current issues, a 12-point rise, and 49% supported more organizations, up 6 points. Black donors also increased their engagement, with 43% donating more money (up 6 points) and 39% giving to more organizations (up 5 points). However, 34% of Black donors responded to current issues, a slight decline of 4 points.

White/non-Hispanic donors saw a drop, with fewer giving in response to current issues (22%, down 5 points) and fewer donating more money (33%, down 2 points).

	AANHPI	Black	Hispanic	White/Non-Hispanic
Annual total donation average	\$849	\$911	\$1,427	\$1,166
Social giving donation average	\$188	\$159	\$325	\$156
Donated more money	28%	43%	43%	33%
Gave to more orgs	31%	39%	49%	33%
Donated in response to a current issue or need	28%	34%	45%	22%

Figure 21: Giving behavior over the last 12 months (by ethnicity)

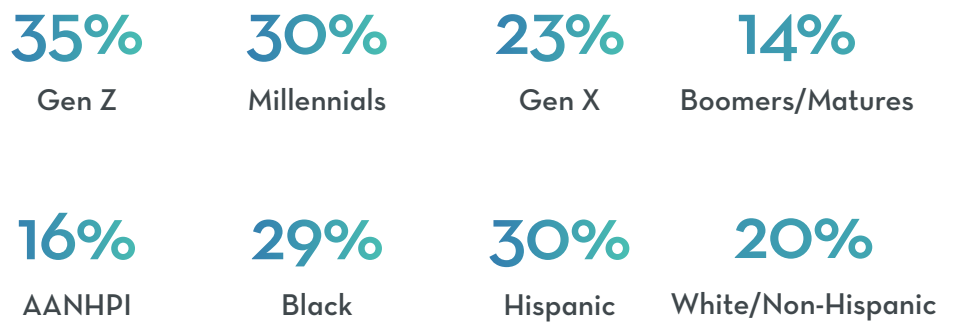


Generosity is a universal value found in all cultures, though it may be expressed differently across various age groups and communities. As giving trends evolve, it’s imperative that nonprofit professionals understand how various groups of donors prefer to practice generosity so they can adapt their strategies to attract and retain donors from diverse backgrounds.

When it comes to social donors and more informal channels of giving, providing mutual aid was a standout for young and diverse donors (**Figure 22**). Gen Z led the way, with 35% reporting they provided mutual aid (meals, clothing, rent assistance, etc.) directly to members of their community, followed closely by 30% of Millennials. Black (29%) and Hispanic (30%) donors were also more likely than other groups to report providing mutual aid.

Reported providing mutual aid directly to members of their communities

Figure 22: Social donor segments that reported providing mutual aid at a higher rate than average.



As stated in [The Generosity Commission Report](#) released in September 2024, “Person-to-person giving is one of the oldest expressions of generosity—and one of the most difficult to capture quantitatively.”

Interestingly, [survey research](#) from GivingTuesday suggests that individuals who participate in mutual aid are “less likely to see distinctions between various forms of giving or between giving to organizations and other recipients.” It’s up to us to find ways to measure and account for giving that doesn’t fall into the traditional generosity ecosystem marked by monetary contributions to registered entities.

The data in this section shows that nonprofits have an opportunity to further engage and cater to an increasingly diverse social donor base, ensuring that campaigns are inclusive and resonate across various communities.



How they heard, how they gave

Word of mouth remains the number one channel through which social donors heard about a giving opportunity, rising 3 points to 58% saying they heard about their last social giving opportunity through a friend, family member, or colleague (Figure 23). Other areas that saw movement were donors who heard about their last giving opportunities through an advertisement, which was up 4 points over last year to 22%, and those who heard about an opportunity through work, up 3 points to 19%.

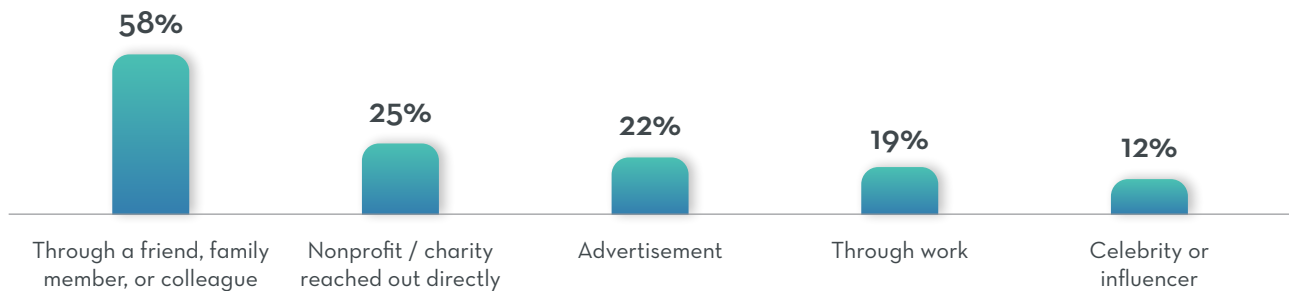


Figure 23: Thinking about the last social fundraising event or campaign you donated to, how did you hear about this donation opportunity? Please select all that apply.

Last year, we explored certain groups that deviated from the norm in how they heard about their last social giving opportunity. In 2024, peer-to-peer donors (72%) and Boomers/Matures (64%) were more likely to have heard about a social giving opportunity through a friend, family member, or colleague (Figure 24). Gen Z and Millennial donors (33%), Black donors (32%), and Hispanic (31%) donors reported hearing learning about social giving opportunities through advertising at a much higher rate than average.

Gen Z (32%) and Millennial (26%) donors were also much more likely to hear about a social giving opportunity through work, versus Gen X at 19%. And while hearing about an opportunity from a celebrity or influencer has remained steady at 12% for all social donors since 2021, a roll-up of Gen Z and Millennials shows they are 9 points more likely, at 21%, to hear about a social giving opportunity through third-party personalities than other generations.

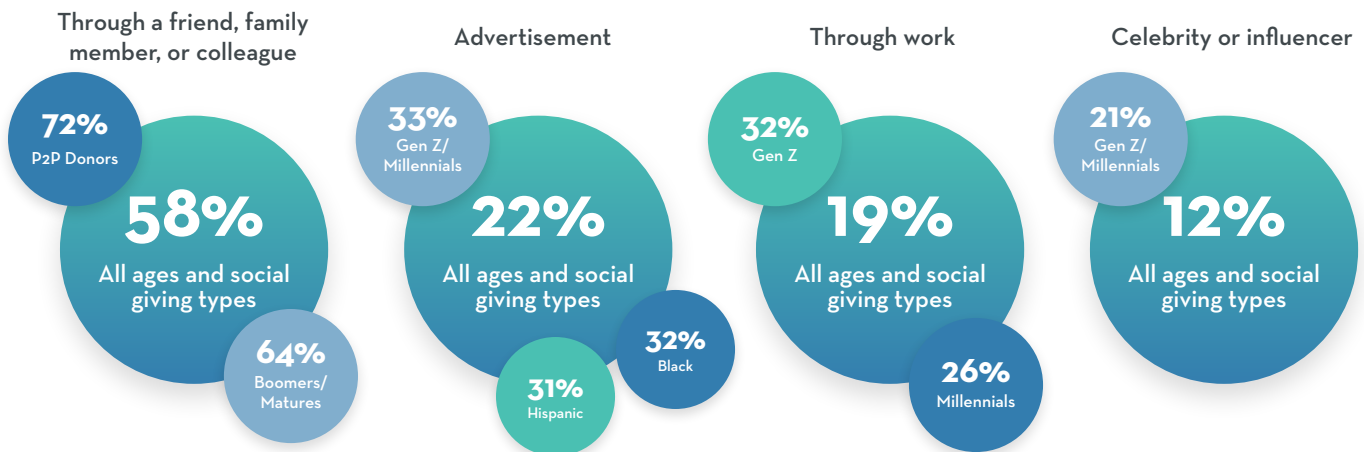


Figure 24: Groups that deviated from the norm in response to “How did you hear about this donation opportunity?”

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

The top four channels through which donors learned about their last giving opportunity were in person, social media, email, and a nonprofit’s website (Figure 25). It’s interesting to track how this has changed before, during, and after the pandemic. Across channels, it’s clear that a shift back to learning about a social giving opportunity in person is gradually occurring, with a 10-point rise taking place from 2021 to 2024.





	2018	2021	2022	2023	2024
 In person	45%	26%	28%	31%	36%
 Social media	30%	37%	29%	29%	31%
 Email	19%	26%	24%	21%	23%
 Website	NA	24%	19%	15%	18%

Figure 25: And where did you find out about this donation opportunity? Please select all that apply.

For donors who reported hearing about a social giving opportunity through social media, there were clear generational differences (Figure 26).

	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers/ Matures
Facebook	28%	42%	66%	93%
X	12%	10%	5%	N/A
Instagram	20%	18%	13%	2%
TikTok	26%	6%	5%	N/A
LinkedIn	N/A	6%	1%	2%
YouTube	12%	15%	7%	N/A

Figure 26: And where did you find out about this donation opportunity? Please select all that apply. (Platform differences by generation)

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

A view of all channels shows that text message, phone call, and direct mail are also in the top 10 (Figure 27).

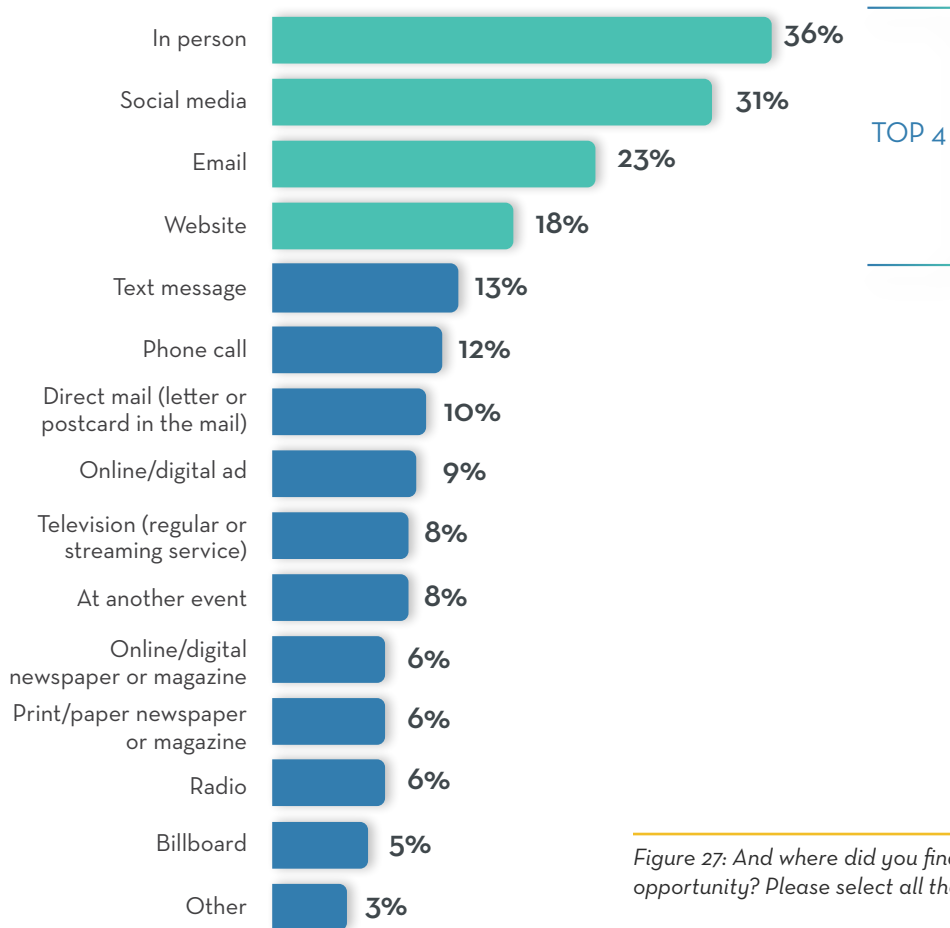


Figure 27: And where did you find out about this donation opportunity? Please select all that apply. (Full list for 2024)

Continuing a trend we've seen since 2021, in-person social donations grew in 2024, while giving through a nonprofit's website was down (Figure 28). This is likely noticeable in social giving due to a drastic reduction in the number of virtual-only events and peer-to-peer campaigns that took place during the pandemic.

	2018	2021	2022	2023	2024
In person	55%	36%	44%	45%	47%
Website	38%	48%	38%	38%	35%
Mobile	8%	23%	26%	24%	23%
Social media	NA	23%	20%	16%	17%
Through the mail	7%	16%	15%	13%	13%
Text	4%	12%	12%	7%	9%

Figure 28: How did you make your donation?

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

Varying preferences again appear between generations when it comes to donation channels, with younger generations being more likely to make donations via social media, mobile, and text than other generations (*Figure 29*). Text donations rose 7 percentage points this year for both Gen Z and Millennials. Social media donations rose significantly for Gen Z, up 11 points over last year to 29%, likely as a result of urgent needs and issues being highlighted on social platforms and accompanied by in-platform donation buttons. Similarly, mobile donations rose 9 points to 41% for Gen Z.

	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	Boomers/ Matures
In person	46%	51%	49%	42%
Website	46%	38%	31%	30%
Mobile	41%	29%	22%	12%
Social media	29%	23%	18%	5%
Through the mail	16%	14%	9%	13%
Text	18%	17%	5%	2%

Figure 29: How did you make your donation? (By generation)

Payment methods for social donors show that credit and debit cards still lead as the preferred payment form, with 47% using this method (*Figure 30*). One noticeable standout was amongst Gen Z and Millennial donors who used a digital wallet option, with 39% reporting they made their last social donation this way compared to 30% on average.

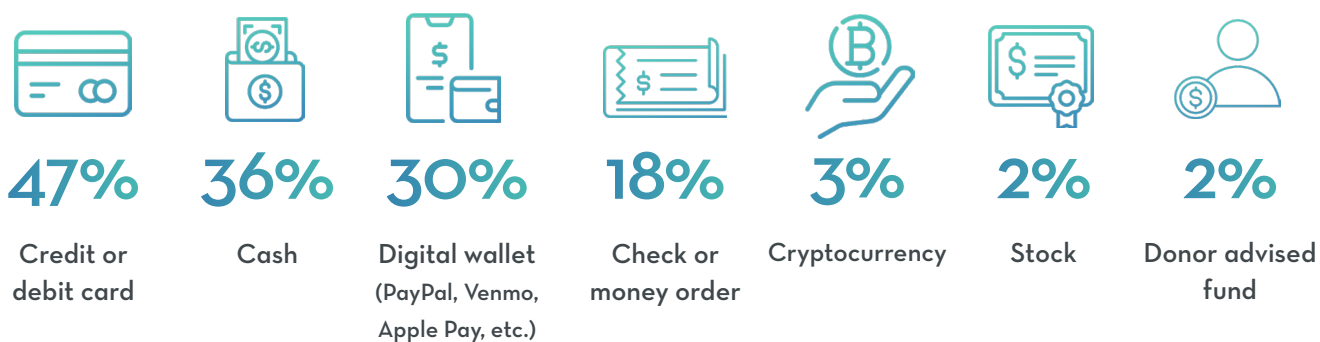


Figure 30: What payment form did you use to make this donation?

Gen Z: the next generation of social impact

As Gen Z enters adulthood, many nonprofits are wondering how they can attract and cultivate these younger donors. This section serves as your Gen Z social donor fact sheet.

Gen Z is expected to make up nearly a third of the workforce by 2025, and the increase in their personal wealth has been reflected in their increased participation and growing financial commitment to philanthropy. They're the only generation that has seen a steady increase in both overall total average annual donations and average social giving amounts since 2022.

Their self-reported annual donation total more than doubled from \$502 in 2022 to \$1,155 this year (*Figure 31*). The average amount of their most recent social donation rose to \$197 from \$179 last year, which is up \$28 (17%) overall from 2022, further demonstrating their growing financial impact in the social giving space.

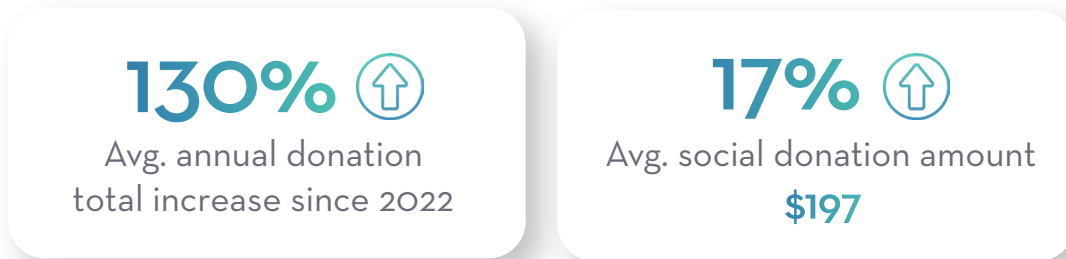


Figure 31: Percentage increase in Gen Z average annual donation total and average social donation amount since 2022.

Gen Z is more likely than any other generation to report being motivated to give by nonprofits demonstrating innovation and adaptability when approaching challenges (57%) - it was their #5 top generosity motivator (*Figure 32*).



6 in 10 _____
gave because an organization demonstrated innovation and adaptability

Figure 32



SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

Another unique aspect of Gen Z's giving habits is their connection to political causes. Forty-three percent (43%) of Gen Z social donors reported increasing their donations to nonprofit organizations that aim to impact the outcome of elections, the highest percentage among all age groups (*Figure 33*). This indicates a strong alignment between Gen Z's philanthropic interests and their desire to create change through political advocacy, outpacing Millennials (39%), Gen X (18%), and Boomers/Matures (5%).

They're also the most likely to cite a current issue or need as the driving force behind their giving, with almost half of Gen Z saying this is why they gave compared to 30% of social donors on average.



43%

increased donations with the aim of impacting election outcomes



46%

gave to address a current issue or need

Figure 33: Standout Gen Z generosity motivators.

Their commitment to global and social justice issues is clear, as 38% of Gen Z donors reported supporting human rights organizations, likely driven by events such as the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine. Additionally, 40% supported children's charities and 43% contributed to health charities—both causes often tied to crisis response. These giving patterns highlight how Gen Z responds to urgent, real-time events, making them a key demographic for nonprofits addressing timely issues (*Figure 34*).

Top 3 organization types

38%

Human rights

40%

Children's charities

43%

Health charities

Figure 34: Top three nonprofit organization types Gen Z donated to.

SOCIAL GIVING TRENDS

Gen Z is known as the TikTok generation. While only 8% of social donors who reported learning about their last social giving opportunity on social media did so on TikTok, nearly a third (26%) of Gen Z reported the same (*Figure 35*). And when it comes to payment methods, 50% of Gen Z reported using a digital wallet option to make their last social donation, a full 20 points higher than the social donor average.



26%

who reported learning about a social giving opportunity on social media did so on TikTok



50%

used a digital wallet option to make a social donation

Figure 35: Percentage of Gen Z social donors who said they learned about a social giving opportunity on social media, TikTok subgroup. Percentage of Gen Z social donors who used a digital wallet to make their last social giving donation.

As Gen Z continues to grow in both wealth and influence, their commitment to timely causes, political advocacy, and innovative approaches to giving sets them apart. Nonprofits that can connect with Gen Z's values and provide accessible, impactful ways to engage will be well-positioned to cultivate this generation's generosity for years to come.





The fundraising event experience

Most important factors for events

Events defined as: Donating to a nonprofit through attending a fundraising event like a gala, golf tournament, or similar event – virtually or in person.

Donor expectations around the event experience are higher than ever. This year, 69% of event donors emphasized that ease of giving was very important, a 6-point increase from 2023 (Figure 36). This underscores the need for nonprofits to prioritize seamless donation experiences. A key part of this is providing an easy-to-use online platform, which 51% of donors identified as essential.

Also important to event donors is understanding how their money makes a difference, with 62% saying it's crucial for organizations to clearly show how gifts will make a difference. Fifty-six percent (56%) said communication of impact was very important.

Nonprofits should also focus on highlighting their mission and infusing it throughout their events, with 59% of event donors indicating this is a key element. Similarly, 59% of event attendees said that creating an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere is very important, pointing to the growing expectation for events to cater to diverse audiences.

Health and safety have again become top concerns, likely due to a summer 2024 surge in COVID cases. Prioritizing the health and safety of guests was very important to 57% of event donors—a 10-point increase over last year.

The average event donation amount grew by nearly 15% to \$250 in 2024 compared to \$218 in 2023 (Figure 37).

Event donors: % very important when considering attending an event



Figure 36: When considering going to an event (like a gala, golf tournament, live/silent auction, etc.) how important is each of the following?

Average donations



Figure 37: Average event donation amount, 2023 and 2024.



THE FUNDRAISING EVENT EXPERIENCE

When event donors were asked to think about the last organization they donated to through social fundraising and the likelihood of supporting them in the next 12 months in various ways, the results indicated huge potential for donor retention, engagement, and additional revenue (Figure 38).

In the 12 months following their last social donation, event donors said they were very or somewhat likely to:



Figure 38: Thinking about the last organization/cause you supported through social fundraising, how likely are you to support that organization/cause within the next twelve months in each of the following ways? (Viewed by event donors who selected “very likely” or “somewhat likely”)

When asked if event donors would participate in another event for the same organization in the future, three-quarters said they definitely would (Figure 39).



Figure 39: Likelihood to attend a similar event.

When it comes to event quality overall, 58% of event donors rated their last event experience as excellent, a 5-point increase over last year (Figure 40). While this is still below the 64% peak seen in 2021, the upward shift reflects a renewed focus on providing high-quality, well-curated events. Initially, post-pandemic donors were simply grateful for the chance to reconnect in person, prioritizing social interaction over the quality of the venue or experience. As in-person events have become more routine, expectations have risen.

The boost in satisfaction this year indicates that organizations are beginning to meet these higher donor expectations more effectively after a few years of fluctuation. It’s also clear that quality affects event donor loyalty, with 91% who rated their last event as “excellent” saying they would definitely attend a similar event in the future.

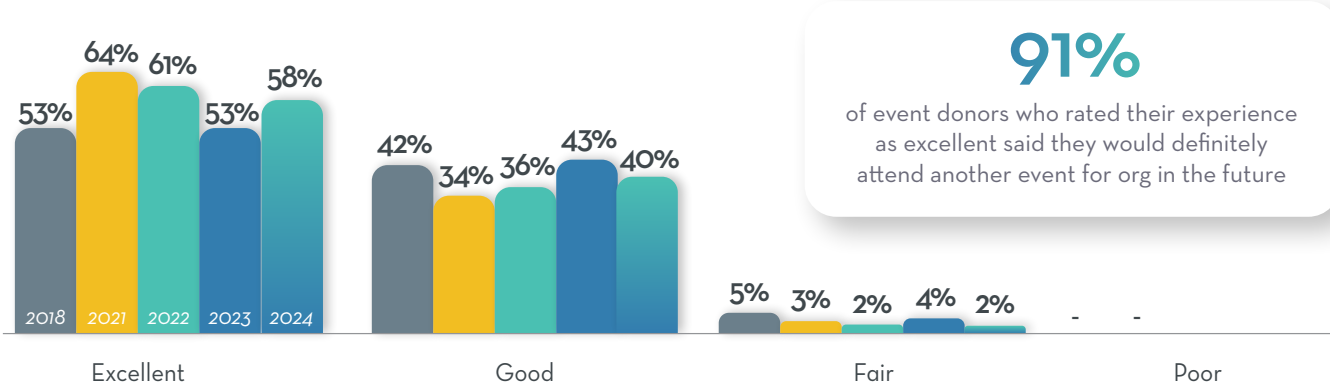


Figure 40: Ratings of the last nonprofit charity event attended, sponsored, or participated in (longitudinal look).



THE FUNDRAISING EVENT EXPERIENCE: EASE

When asked how easy it was to complete certain actions during an event, 84% of those donors reported that it was easy to make their donation, and 76% noted the same about donating during the event itself (Figure 41). This reinforces the importance of maintaining a seamless giving experience.

One notable area of improvement was the ease with which event guests could access the event schedule, rising 8 points to 68%. In addition to possible efforts to improve logistics communication, this could be due to more predictable event formats post-pandemic.

One area to watch is event checkout, which dropped 9 points this year to 68%, indicating a need to revisit post-event processes and supporter-driven technology to streamline checkout and elevate the attendee experience..

Event guests also reported a 7-point drop in ease of interacting with other donors or participants, suggesting that more attention may be needed to facilitate networking or interaction during events.

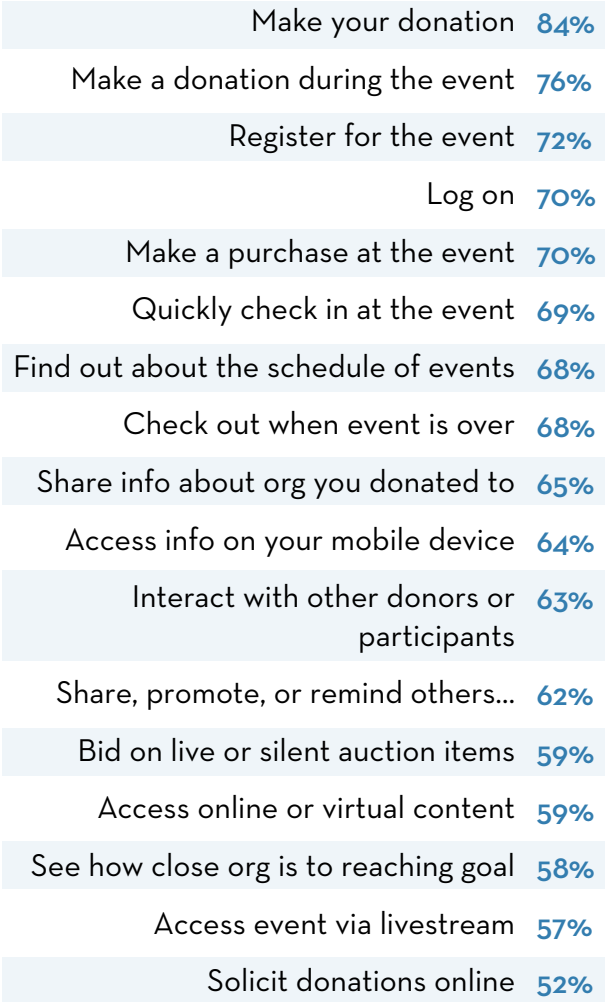


Figure 41: How easy was it to do each of the following? (% rated as very easy, excluding don't know or not applicable)

GIVING WITHIN EVENTS

Figure 42 shows how survey respondents donated at their most recent fundraising event. These numbers remain largely unchanged compared to 2023, with tickets, raffles, and merch remaining the most popular ways to give during an event.

Methods used to make donations as part of event (Among event donors only)

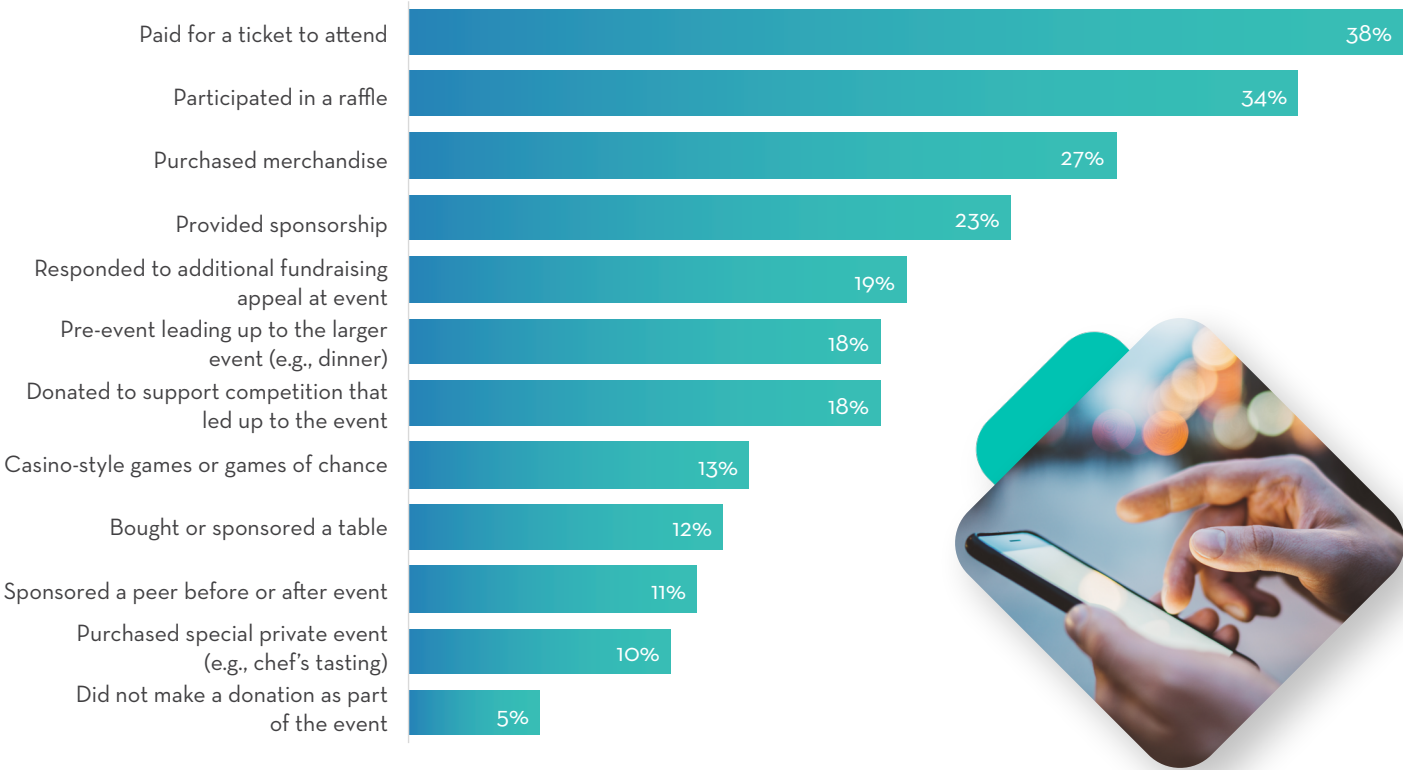
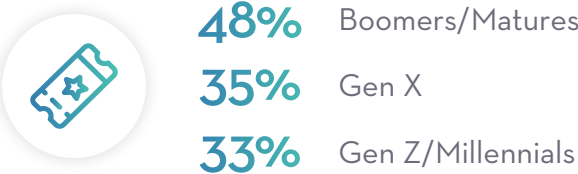


Figure 42: Through which method(s) did you make a donation as part of the event? Select all that apply.

It's interesting to note that when we zoom in at a generational level, a higher percentage of Boomer/Mature event attendees reported paying for a ticket to attend—48% of Boomers/Matures said they paid for a ticket compared to 35% of Gen X, and 33% of Gen Z/Millennials (Figure 43). Gen Z/Millennials were more likely to buy or sponsor a table, with 16% reporting doing so, compared to 11% of Gen X, and 8% of Boomers/Matures.

Generational standouts

Who paid for a ticket to attend?



Who paid for or sponsored a table?



Figure 43: Generational standouts in who paid for an event ticket and who paid for/sponsored a table.

THE FUNDRAISING EVENT EXPERIENCE: ENGAGEMENT

Several engagement features saw notable shifts in importance to event donors, reflecting evolving preferences for what makes an event truly engaging (Figure 44). Testimonials from people benefiting from the organization's work experienced a positive shift of 7 points to 59%.

This reflects a growing preference among donors for personal stories that connect them directly to the impact of their contributions. Participants are more engaged when they can see the real-life outcomes of their support, suggesting that emotional resonance is becoming increasingly vital to donor engagement.

Interactive activities or lessons, such as wine tastings or cooking classes, also saw a significant rise in engagement, up 9 points to 50%. This suggests donors increasingly value opportunities for hands-on experiences that create memorable moments during events. Raffles also made a comeback, jumping 7 points to 46%, signaling their continued appeal to donors looking for casual fun.

Socializing remains a key aspect of event engagement, with 6-in-10 donors indicating that the ability to socialize with other guests is an important part of their event experience. Donors clearly want both: the chance to connect with others and the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities or mission-focused moments that bring them closer to the cause they're supporting.

Core components of traditional fundraising events, like both live and silent auctions and event speakers, all saw a resurgence.

Overall, these trends reflect a shift toward a more immersive event experience, where donors want to both socialize and participate in meaningful activities that reinforce their connection to the nonprofit's mission.

Testimonials from people benefiting from the organization's work	59%
Ability to socialize with other guests	57%
The speakers	54%
The silent auction	54%
Hearing about the impact of your donation	54%
The live auction	53%
The theme of the event	52%
Ability to track the organization's progress towards fundraising goal	51%
Interactive activity or lessons	50%
Live donation match opportunity	49%
Live entertainment (comedy, music, etc.)	49%
Viewing live results of a competition	48%
Raffles	46%
Interactive challenges or contests to join	44%
Happy hour	43%
Online posts leading up to the event	43%
Live viewing of a relevant documentary or film	41%
Live comment/message feed	41%
Instant live recognition of donors	39%
A custom hashtag you could share in reference to the event	39%
Pre-recorded content/videos	37%
Casino-style games or games of chance	33%

Figure 44: How engaging was each of the following features of this event? (excluding don't know or not applicable)



Recommendations for improving the event experience

1. Enhance event quality by fostering social connection

To continue the upward trend in event quality ratings, consider appealing to event attendees' desire to socialize with other participants. Event donors are much more likely to place importance on the ability to interact with other guests (48%) than peer-to-peer participants (28%), but they reported a 7-point drop in the ease of interacting with other attendees at events. To cater to event attendees' preferences and provide high-quality events, this could mean curating smaller events for a more intimate experience, networking opportunities, and one-to-one attention from staff and volunteers.

2. Offer ticketing options that include group discounts

Social giving is called social giving for a reason! To appeal to a wide range of supporters, be sure to offer various ticket options, including group discounts. Gen Z/Millennials reported purchasing an event table at higher rates than other generations. Providing an incentive like a group discount will appeal to this group (and guests of all ages—everyone appreciates a deal).

3. Take a fresh look at check-in and checkout for a seamless experience

Event donors value ease in the event experience, with 84% of event attendees saying that giving was easy. With a 9-point drop in event donors reporting it was easy to check out after an event and no change in those reporting that check-in was easy, it's crucial to re-examine these processes and see where you can make tweaks, whether manually or by investing in technology that contributes to a frictionless event and giving experience.

4. Offer interactive, mission-focused experiences

Donors increasingly seek meaningful, immersive experiences that align with a nonprofit's mission. Incorporating interactive elements into your next event can significantly boost engagement. According to this year's data, nearly half of event donors (50%) cited hands-on activities or interactive lessons as a key engagement feature. By integrating activities like in-person or virtual demonstrations, workshops, or themed sessions tied to your cause, you can create deeper connections with your audience. For instance, a nonprofit focused on food security could host a hands-on cooking class showcasing local ingredients, while an environmental organization could lead a sustainability workshop. These mission-focused experiences give attendees a tangible way to connect with your cause, deepening their understanding of the impact their donations make.

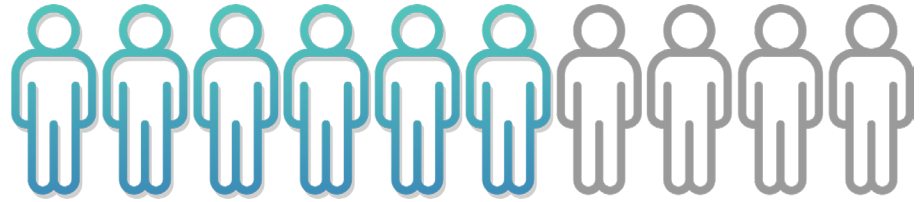
5. Create an inclusive and welcoming environment

Sixty-six percent (66%) of event donors cited inclusivity and a welcoming atmosphere as key motivators. Ensure your event is accessible to all attendees—both physically and culturally. This might include offering materials in multiple languages, providing accommodations for individuals with disabilities, and fostering a diverse lineup of speakers and activities reflecting the communities you serve. Additionally, inviting participants to share their stories and experiences can make the event feel more personal and inclusive, fostering a strong community connection and greater donor loyalty. Making your event space and messaging feel inclusive not only drives participation but strengthens your relationship with diverse donor groups, increasing the likelihood of continued engagement.

The event experience: fast facts



6 in 10



rated their last event experience as excellent



2 in 3

said ticket options like VIP versus a standard experience were very or somewhat important



15%

The average event donation has risen 15% since 2023

48%

said their last event offered a VIP ticket/experience

64%

donated because they care about the organization's mission and work

66%

were motivated to give because the event was inclusive and welcoming

25%

purchased a VIP ticket/experience



The auction experience

This year, we introduced questions centered on nonprofit auctions to address ongoing debate about their effectiveness and return on investment (ROI). Our findings show auctions can still deliver strong returns when executed well and aligned with supporter expectations. Use these insights to benchmark and improve your organization’s auction results.

Most important factors for auctions

Understanding what auction participants value most is key to maximizing engagement and driving bidding.

A wide variety of items and the ability to preview auction items before bidding both topped the list, with almost 6 in 10 auction donors citing these as critical (Figure 45). A diverse selection of items appealing to different interests and having the opportunity to preview beforehand builds excitement and enables participants to plan their bids.

Availability of desirable items was another high-ranking factor, with 56% stating that having items they truly want to bid on is essential. Additionally, 53% of auction donors noted that having multiple affordable items to choose from was an important consideration.

More than half (53%) of auction donors said that receiving an easy-to-read receipt with clear information about item tax deductibility was very important, highlighting the need for transparency and convenience.

Finally, post-auction logistics were emphasized by 46% of auction guests, who appreciated the flexibility of being able to pick up their items later or have them shipped.

Different generations, different priorities

Likely due to growing up in a more digitally focused world, younger generations appear more interested in aspects of a frictionless auction experience (Figure 46).

Receiving outbid notifications via text message is particularly important to Gen Z and Millennials, with 65% valuing this feature. The convenience of fixed-price or buy-it-now items also resonates more with younger donors, as 61% of Gen Z and Millennials appreciate this option. Automatic suggestions for similar items are another key feature for 59% of younger auction donors.

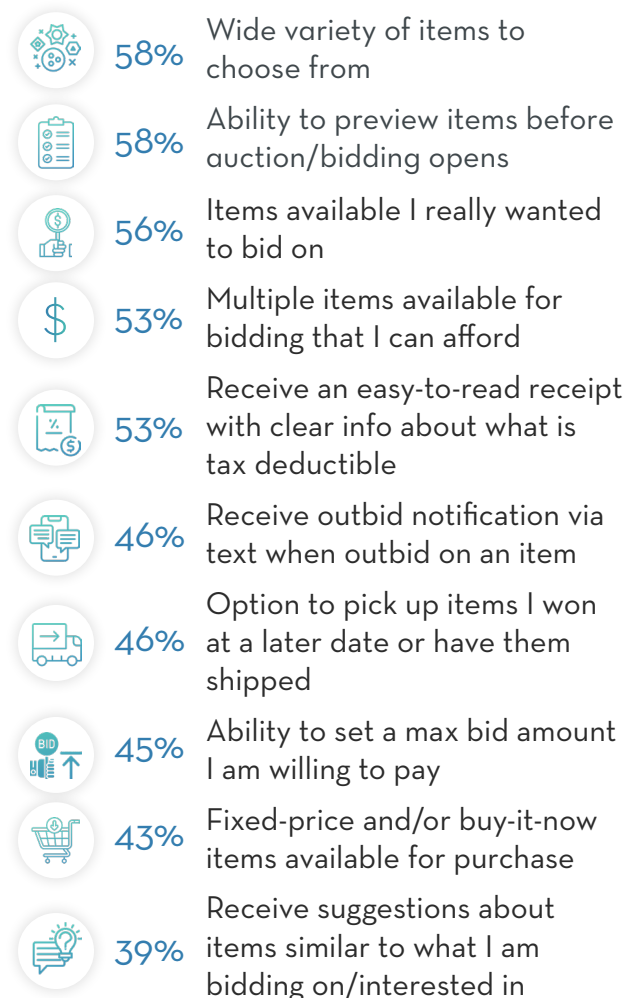


Figure 45: When considering going to a nonprofit auction, how important is each of the following?

	Receive outbid notifications	Fixed-price & buy-it-now items	Receive suggestions for similar items
Gen Z/ Millennials	65%	61%	59%
Gen X	43%	39%	33%
Boomers/ Matures	24%	20%	16%

Figure 46: Auction features more highly rated as “very important,” by generation.



The auction experience: ease

Creating a smooth and intuitive experience for auction attendees is critical for ensuring high engagement and participation.

It's encouraging to see that around three-quarters of auction participants found critical aspects like making a donation during the event, registering, and making purchases during the event to be very easy (Figure 47).

Ease of check-in and checkout were also rated as very easy by around 7-in-10 auction participants, indicating a focus on streamlining these processes to enhance the overall event experience.

While many aspects of the auction process are running smoothly, there's room for improvement in areas like adding and saving payment information (56%) and the ability to set maximum bids (55%). These functionalities help create a personalized, streamlined auction experience that encourages participants to stay engaged without constantly monitoring their bids.

Other areas, like the ability to view a list of items bid on (54%), mark an item as a favorite (50%), or sort and filter items based on preferences (45% and 42%, respectively), also have opportunities for improvement. These features offer convenience, customization, and efficiency, enabling attendees to focus on the items that matter most to them.

There is a notable gap between nonprofit professionals' perceptions of ease and attendees' actual experiences, especially when it comes to placing a max bid, where there is an 11-point difference in sentiment (Figure 48). Similarly, there are discrepancies in other areas like setting a maximum bid, adding and saving payment information, and placing additional bids after being outbid, indicating room for improvement in making these auction processes more user-friendly.

Make a donation during the event	76%
Register for the event	74%
Make a purchase at the event	73%
Quickly check in	69%
Check out when the event is over	68%
Bid on live or silent auction items	64%
View categories of items you're interested in	61%
Place another bid after receiving an outbid notification	59%
Indicate how you want to receive or pick up won items	57%
Add and save payment information	56%
Set a max bid on an item	55%
View a list of items you bid on	54%
Mark an item as a "favorite" to return to later	50%
Sort items based on interest	45%
Apply filters to categories and items to view in a way you prefer	42%

Figure 47: How easy was it to do each of the following? (% rated as very easy, excluding don't know or not applicable)

Attendees versus nonprofit professionals

	Nonprofit professionals who said they think this is very easy for their attendees	Attendee ratings of "very easy"
Set a max bid on an item	66%	55%
Add and save your payment information	65%	56%
Place another bid after receiving an outbid notification	68%	59%
View a list of items you bid on	63%	54%

Figure 48: Comparison of auction activity ease ratings between auction attendees and nonprofit professionals.

The auction experience: engagement

According to auction attendees, the most engaging aspect of an auction is hearing testimonials from people directly benefiting from the organization’s work, with 63% citing this as highly engaging (Figure 49).

Incorporating testimonials into live auction events or on your auction page can create a powerful emotional connection between donors and the cause, making the event more meaningful and impactful for participants.

Naturally, the silent and live auctions themselves were rated as very engaging. Sixty-one percent (61%) of auction-goers rated silent auctions as very engaging, and 59% rated live auctions the same, highlighting the importance of investing in a quality auctioneer and high-energy experience.

The rankings for the ability to socialize with other guests (58%) and hearing about the impact of their donations (54%) are key factors that demonstrate the importance of personal connection and showcasing the tangible results of donor support.

Testimonials from people benefiting from the organization’s work	63%
The silent auction	61%
The live auction	59%
The speakers	58%
Ability to socialize with other guests	58%
Hearing about the impact of your donation	54%
Live donation match opportunity	52%
Interactive activity or lessons	52%
The theme of the event	51%
Live entertainment (comedy, music, etc.)	51%
Viewing live results of a competition	50%
Ability to track the organization’s progress towards fundraising goal	50%
Online posts leading up to the event	48%
Raffles	46%
Live comment/message feed	46%
Instant live recognition of donors	45%
Live viewing of a relevant documentary or film	45%
Interactive challenges or contests to join	44%
Happy hour	44%
A custom hashtag you could share in reference to the event	42%
Pre-recorded content/videos	39%
Casino-style games or games of chance	33%



Figure 49: How engaging was each of the following features of this event? (excluding don't know or not applicable)



The auction experience: engagement

Auction donors are particularly loyal, with 8 in 10 reporting they would attend another event for the same organization in the future (Figure 50). They're also most likely to convert to regular annual donors (83%) or to become a regular monthly donor (64%).

Auction donor loyalty

82%

would attend another event in the future

83%

said they were likely to become an annual donor

64%

said they were likely to become a monthly donor

Figure 50: Percent of auction participants who said they would attend another event for the same org; percent who were "very likely" or "somewhat likely" to become annual or monthly donors.

While 63% of auction attendees rated hearing testimonials from people directly benefiting from the organization's work as the most engaging aspect of their auction experience, less than half of surveyed nonprofit professionals reported offering testimonials at their auctions.



42%

of nonprofits report offering testimonials at auctions





The auction experience: fast facts

How would you rate the last nonprofit auction in which you participated?



TOP 5

most effective marketing channels for promoting auctions

- 1 - Email 84%
- 2 - Social media 56%
- 3 - Auction site 54%
- 4 - Printed mailer 43%
- 5 - Texts 37%

6 in 10



auction attendees said they responded to a donation appeal at their last event

\$529

average expected gift

49%

reported giving more this year

TOP 5

Most popular item categories

- 1 - Gift cards 33%
- 2 - Dining & culinary 32%
- 3 - Travel packages 26%
- 4 - Experiences/activities 25%
- 5 - Sports & entertainment 25%

36%

of auction attendees say different ticket options and packages are "very important"

58%

said they were very likely to make a one-time donation in 12 months after auction



2 in 10

social donors report participating in an auction



Recommendations for improving the auction experience

1. Offer a wide variety of items at price points everyone can afford.

A successful auction requires a balance of highly desirable and affordable items. This year, 58% of auction participants emphasized the importance of having a wide variety of items to bid on, while 53% said it's essential to have items they can afford. To increase engagement, ensure your auction offers a broad range of items at different price points—this will appeal to both high-end donors and those with more modest budgets. By including diverse options, you create opportunities for more participants to get involved, ultimately driving overall bidding activity and revenue.

2. Streamline logistics with seamless check-in and checkout.

Seven in ten auction participants rated the ease of check-in and checkout as very important. To improve the overall event experience, ensure that both check-in and checkout are seamless and efficient. Consider digital check-in solutions, pre-registered payment methods, and clear, easy-to-follow instructions for receiving won or purchased items to keep the process smooth and stress-free for attendees. Additionally, nearly half of auction participants (46%) appreciated the flexibility of being able to pick up items later or have them shipped. Providing convenient post-auction logistics, such as flexible pick-up times or shipping options, can enhance the donor experience and help avoid friction after the event.

3. Highlight digital tools to attract & engage younger generations.

Younger donors, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, are driving demand for a more streamlined, digital auction experience. Gen Z, in particular, values receiving outbid notifications, having fixed-price or buy-it-now options, and receiving item suggestions based on their interests. By integrating these functionalities, you'll create a frictionless, engaging experience that resonates with younger donors' expectations. Providing digital enhancements not only caters to these tech-savvy generations but also keeps them actively participating throughout the auction, increasing engagement and overall revenue.

4. Close the gap between perception and reality.

Review discrepancies between your perception of auction processes and attendee feedback. While nonprofit professionals may believe certain features, like setting a max bid or adding payment information, are easy to use, attendees often report less satisfaction with these areas. To address this, consider gathering more direct attendee feedback post-event, testing auction platforms from the donor's perspective, and making incremental improvements that simplify the process. By aligning attendee experiences with nonprofit expectations, organizations can improve overall satisfaction, enhance the bidding experience, and increase participation in future auctions.

5. Leverage testimonials to deepen engagement.

Testimonials from people directly benefiting from a nonprofit's work were ranked as the most engaging auction feature by attendees. However, many nonprofits may overlook the power of incorporating real-life stories into their auctions. To capitalize on this, make testimonials a core part of your auction strategy, whether through live presentations, pre-recorded videos, or written stories displayed at the event. These personal narratives help attendees connect emotionally with your cause, driving deeper engagement and motivating higher levels of giving.



Peer-to-peer: the Run/Walk/Ride experience

Most important factors for Run/Walk/Ride

Run/Walk/Ride defined as: Donating to a nonprofit by sponsoring someone or participating in a fundraising event like a run, walk, or ride.

In 2024, the key factors for peer-to-peer (P2P) donors have remained consistent with past years, but there are some notable shifts in priorities. Ease of donating continues to be the top consideration, with 62% of peer-to-peer donors emphasizing its importance (Figure 52). This reinforces the need for a frictionless, easy-to-use donation platform, especially since much of the fundraising for run/walk/ride events takes place online before the event itself.

Health and safety became a larger concern in 2024, rising to 58%, again likely due to health risks from the COVID-19 surge during the summer of 2024.

Mission and impact also remain important to peer-to-peer donors, with 57% indicating that it's important to know how their donation makes a difference, and 58% citing the organization's ability to highlight its mission as key. Like last year, this emphasizes the importance of clear communication and storytelling around how funds are used, reinforcing the connection between donors and the causes they support.

In contrast, factors like networking opportunities (26%) and promotional giveaways (24%) ranked much lower, indicating that donors at runs/walks/rides are less concerned with tangible rewards or making professional connections. Instead, they are focusing on elements that reinforce mission alignment and provide meaningful experiences.

P2P donors: % very important (top items)



Figure 52: When considering sponsoring someone or participating in a walk, run, ride, or similar activity, how important is each of the following?



Figure 53: Average run/walk/ride donation amount, 2023 to 2024.

The average run/walk/ride donation amount grew 9% to \$150 in 2024 compared to \$137 in 2023 (Figure 53).



The Run/Walk/Ride experience: ease

In 2024, many peer-to-peer ease factors saw notable improvements, reflecting a more streamlined and participant-friendly experience.

One of the most striking improvements was the ease of logging on, which increased by 11 points to 69% (Figure 54). Similarly, the ease of checking in at events saw a notable jump, up 10 points to 66%.

Another key positive trend is the increased ease of donating during the event, up 6 points to 68%, suggesting a smoother, more accessible donation process in real-time at events.

Ease of sharing information about the organization increased by 7 points to 61%, indicating that organizations are providing easily accessible information about their mission that empowers participants to spread the word about the cause they're supporting.

Several digital components also saw growth, with soliciting donations online jumping 11 points to 54% and setting up personal fundraising pages improving by 6 points to 50%. These changes likely reflect ongoing improvements in platform usability and accessibility for participants.

Tracking progress toward the organization's fundraising goal also became easier, climbing 8 points to 62%, reflecting an improvement in transparency and communication tools during events.

While several ease factors remained relatively consistent (such as making a donation, which stayed at 81%), the significant gains in areas related to logging on, social interaction, and tracking progress suggest that nonprofits and fundraising platform providers alike are making important strides in delivering smoother, more engaging experiences for peer-to-peer participants.

Make a donation	81%
Log on	69%
Make a donation during the event	68%
Quickly check in at the event	66%
Make a purchase at the event	63%
Check out when the event is over	63%
Interact with other donors/ participants	62%
See how close the org was to reaching its goal	62%
Access information on your mobile device	62%
Share information about the organization you donated to	61%
Register for the event	60%
Track your own or a participant's progress toward a goal	59%
Share, promote, or remind others about the fundraiser	57%
Access online or virtual content	55%
Solicit donations online	54%
Set up your personal fundraising page	50%
Access the event via livestream	49%

Figure 54: How easy was it to do each of the following? (% reported as "very easy," excluding "don't know" or "not applicable")



The Run/Walk/Ride experience: engagement

Several peer-to-peer engagement factors saw significant changes in 2024, suggesting evolving priorities for participants. Testimonials from people benefiting from the organization’s work experienced a notable 9-point increase, rising to 50% (Figure 55). Again, this reinforces the growing desire for demonstrated impact and a more direct connection between donors and the people their contributions support.

Similarly, the sense of being part of a team increased by 9 points, reaching 48%. This suggests that participants are increasingly valuing the community aspect of peer-to-peer events, emphasizing the importance of collective action and shared goals. In line with this, the ability to track progress—both personal and organizational—remains a key feature, with 49% and 48% respectively finding it very engaging.

One-click donations emerged as another significant factor, with 50% of respondents finding it engaging. The ease of donating quickly and effortlessly remains crucial in enhancing the donor experience.

Hearing about the impact of donations remained strong at 48%, reflecting donors’ ongoing desire for transparency and clarity on how contributions make a difference. Leader boards and seeing progress also remained engaging features for 4-in-10 participants, though they didn’t see substantial growth compared to other factors.

Interestingly, engagement features like fundraising milestones or badges (38%), custom hashtags (34%), and online posts leading up to the event (34%) continue to play a role in the overall peer-to-peer experience, but they have not seen much growth. This could be due to a need for more creativity or a fresh approach to these items.

Overall, this year’s data shows a continued focus on ease of participation, personal connection, and community building, with more emphasis on features that enhance the team experience and provide real-time progress tracking.

Testimonials	50%
One-click donations (virtual only)	50%
A way to track personal progress	49%
Hearing about the impact of your donation	48%
Tracking the org’s progress	48%
Being part of a team	48%
Leaderboards	44%
Seeing fundraising progress of friends/social network	43%
Ability to chat	42%
Live donation match opportunity	41%
Fundraising milestones or badges	38%
A custom hashtag	34%
Online posts leading up to the event	34%
Having a team leader/captain	33%

Figure 55: How engaging was each of the following features of the event or campaign you sponsored or participated in? (% very engaging, excluding “don’t know or “not applicable”)





Recommendations for improving the Run/Walk/Ride experience

1. Showcase impact to inspire peer-to-peer donors.

To engage peer-to-peer donors effectively, focus on showcasing the impact of their contributions. Include testimonials from beneficiaries directly on your event page to create a strong emotional connection. Consider tying specific donation amounts to tangible outcomes (e.g., '\$100 provides school supplies for 10 children'), so donors can clearly see the difference their support makes. By emphasizing the real-world impact of their generosity, you'll inspire deeper engagement and encourage continued participation.

2. Make sure guests know you care about their health and safety.

Health and safety have become even more crucial for run/walk/ride donors, with its importance rising by 8 points this year. To meet these expectations, prioritize your donors' well-being by clearly communicating health and safety protocols well in advance of the event. Make this information easy to find and understand and be sure to communicate any updates or changes. Provide resources like hand sanitizer, masks, or other necessary items to ensure all participants feel supported. You should also have a plan in place for addressing health concerns during the event, and it's essential to encourage participants to prioritize self-care. Remind them to stay hydrated, eat nutritious snacks, and be mindful of their physical health throughout the experience.

3. Breathe new life into gamification.

Milestones, badges, and hashtags may not currently be rated as the most engaging elements for peer-to-peer participants, but they can become powerful tools with the right strategy. Consider tying contests or challenges to specific hashtags and social media activities, allowing donors to compete and share their progress. Call out individual fundraisers based on milestone achievements using video or written shoutouts on social media leading up to the event. By celebrating accomplishments publicly, you'll increase engagement and create a stronger community atmosphere around your cause.

4. Prioritize re-engagement of peer-to-peer participants and donors.

Since 52% of peer-to-peer donors report being at least somewhat likely to become monthly donors (20% very likely), build post-event communications that encourage this shift. A follow-up strategy should immediately thank participants and present them with the option to continue their support as a monthly donor, with clear examples of how consistent giving can further the cause they just supported.

5. Personalize event experiences.

To maximize donor retention and deepen connections, leverage data gathered from participants, such as their previous event participation, donation history, and milestones reached during the event. By personalizing your pre- and post-event communications, you can make each participant feel uniquely valued. Send tailored messages that recognize their specific contributions, such as a personalized thank you for hitting fundraising goals, or a story that directly ties their impact to a real-life outcome. Consider incorporating custom event swag or exclusive content for returning participants and highlighting their personal achievements in follow-up materials. By creating these one-to-one, meaningful touchpoints, you can enhance the donor experience and increase the likelihood of ongoing engagement and support, transforming a one-time participant into a lifelong supporter.



Run/Walk/Ride: fast facts



62% donated because they wanted to support the person who asked them to donate

69%
would definitely participate in another event for the same organization

Most likely to hear about an event from a *friend or family member*



49%
were very familiar with org before donating - lowest of all social donor types

37%
reported that only in-person participation options were available



39%
said fundraising milestones or badges were very engaging





The occasion, challenge & giving day experience

Most important factors for occasions, challenges & giving days

Occasion & challenge defined as: donating/requesting donations online for challenges (like the Ice Bucket Challenge), giving days (like GivingTuesday/Black History month), and occasions (like a birthday or memorial tribute).

Occasion, challenge, and giving day donors continue to prioritize ease of donating, impact, and mission alignment. While most factors remained steady from 2023, the importance of a mobile-optimized donation platform increased significantly, rising 11 points to 49% (Figure 56). This indicates that donors are increasingly relying on mobile devices to facilitate giving and reflects broader digital trends.

The value donors place on hearing from people directly benefiting from the organization’s work also saw growth—albeit modest—increasing by 4 points to 49%. As with other types of social giving, this reflects the growing importance of personal stories and direct connections in driving donor engagement.

Nearly half of occasion donors (47%) indicated that it’s important to have the ability to direct their donations toward specific projects or individuals within an organization. This underscores the continued desire for more personalized giving experiences, where donors feel a greater connection and control over how their contributions are used, allowing them to support causes or initiatives that resonate most with their values.

Recognition of top fundraisers increased by 5 points, from 27% in 2023 to 32% in 2024. While still a lower priority compared to other factors, this uptick highlights that donor recognition is key, contributors can play a role in driving participation and engagement.



Figure 57: Average occasion/giving day donation amount, 2023 to 2024.

Occasion donors % very important (top items)



Figure 56: When considering sponsoring someone or participating in a walk, run, ride, or similar activity, how important is each of the following?

The average donation amount for occasion, challenge, and giving day donors saw a small increase of 4% this year to \$170 (Figure 57).



The occasion, challenge & giving day experience: ease

Ease continues to be a top priority for occasion donors, with making a donation remaining the most important factor (Figure 58). The ability to access information on mobile devices is also crucial, as donors increasingly rely on mobile technology to manage their contributions on the go.

One notable change is the ability to set up a personal fundraising page, which increased 8 points to 55%, reflecting an enhanced focus on user-friendly tools that empower donors to create personalized fundraising experiences.

Other factors, such as the ability to share information about the organization (62%) and tracking the organization’s progress towards its goal (61%), saw only minor shifts, highlighting their steady importance in enhancing donor engagement.

Make your donation	84%
Access information on your mobile device	65%
Share information about the organization you donated to	62%
See how close the org was to reaching its goal	61%
Access online or virtual content	59%
Share, promote, or remind others about the fundraiser	57%
Set up your personal fundraising page	55%
Interact with other donors or participants	53%
Solicit donations online	50%

Figure 58: How easy was it to do each of the following? (% reported as “very easy,” excluding “don’t know or “not applicable”)





Occasion, challenge, and giving days: fast facts

75%

said they were likely to become regular annual donors

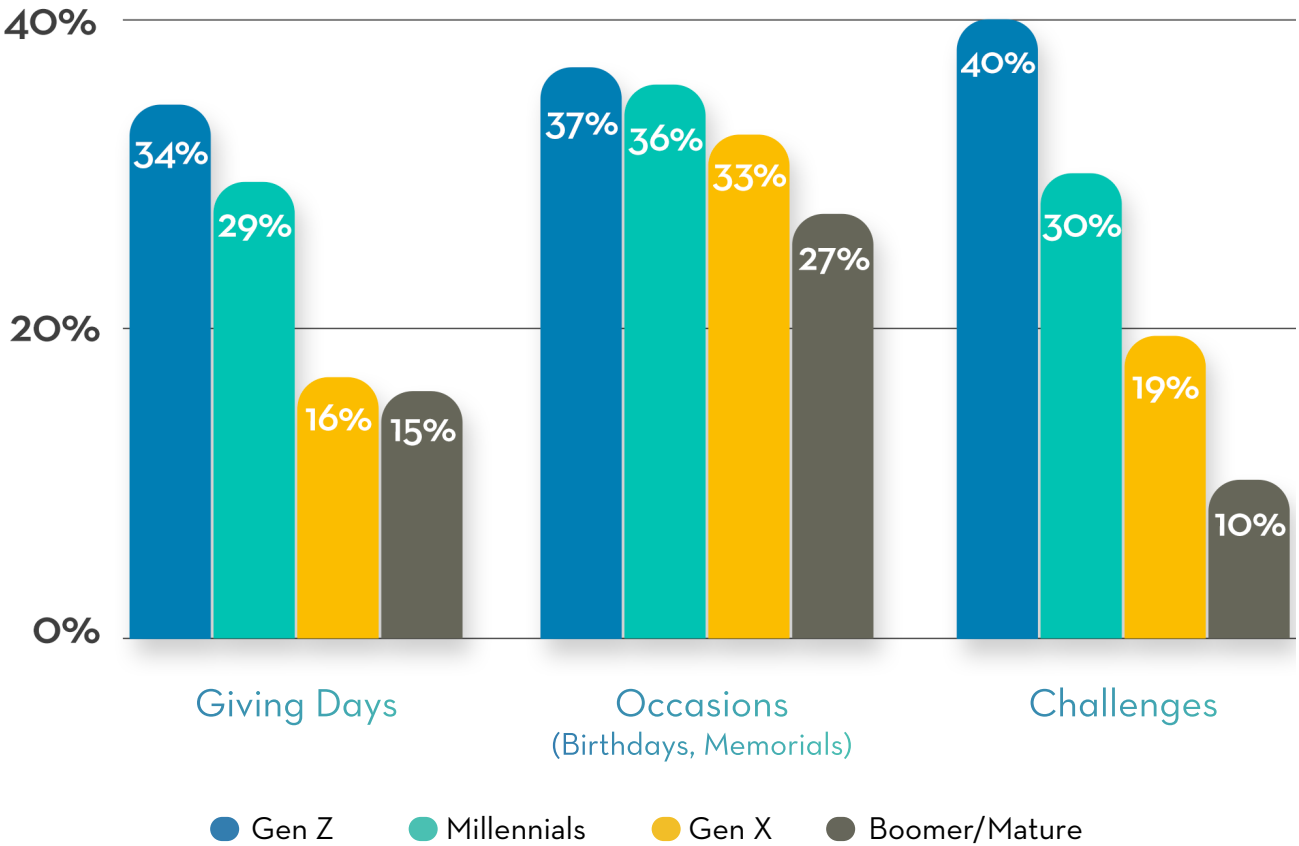
63%

said they were likely to become monthly donors

71%

said they were likely to volunteer for the organization

Generational participation breakdown





Recommendations for improving the occasion, challenge, & giving day experience

1. Nurture long-term relationships with occasion and giving day donors.

With 63% of occasion, giving day, and challenge donors indicating they are at least somewhat likely to become monthly donors within the next 12 months (29% very likely), nonprofits have a significant opportunity to foster sustained support. Many of these donors may have come across your mission by donating on a giving day, but that doesn't mean they're automatically going to become loyal donors! Seal the deal by cultivating these relationships through targeted follow-up communications, sharing impact stories that highlight how their contributions make a difference, and offering opportunities for regular engagement. By reinforcing their connection to your mission and showing the lasting effects of their giving, you can convert occasional donors into consistent, long-term supporters.

2. Offer a way to direct giving day donations to specific programs to amplify impact.

To maximize the impact of giving days and special occasions, offer donors the option to direct their donations toward specific projects, people, or causes that resonate with them. This can create a stronger connection and increase donor satisfaction, as they can see the direct outcome of their contributions. Additionally, leverage data from past donations to segment communications and personalize appeals. For example, ahead of a major day like Giving Tuesday, send tailored messages to donors who have previously given to specific programs, highlighting updates and success stories tied to those areas. By showcasing the ongoing need and impact, you increase the likelihood of re-engaging these donors and inspiring them to give again.

3. Offer personal fundraising pages for occasion and giving day donors.

To amplify donor engagement during occasions and giving days, consider offering personal fundraising pages that allow donors to create their own Do-It-Yourself (DIY) campaigns. This empowers supporters to share their passion for your mission with their networks, expanding your reach and increasing donations. Personal fundraising pages also give donors the flexibility to set specific goals, track progress, and make their appeals personal and impactful. By enabling donors to take ownership of their fundraising efforts, you foster deeper connections and motivate long-term engagement with your organization.

4. Highlight innovation and adaptability to engage younger donors.

Younger donors are more likely to give in response to a current issue or need, but not every cause is tied to a timely event. To engage them on giving days or special occasions, highlight how your organization is using innovation and adaptability to address ongoing challenges in communities. Showcasing how you're leveraging new strategies, tools, or approaches to create impact will resonate with younger donors who value forward-thinking solutions. Be transparent about how your nonprofit is evolving to meet changing needs, whether through digital initiatives, local partnerships, or creative community engagement efforts. This approach helps build relevance and urgency, even in the absence of a specific crisis.

How to use the findings

As we navigate today's fundraising landscape, social giving has continued to evolve, driven by younger, more diverse donors and changing expectations around trust, impact, and ease. The findings from this year's study can help your organization refine its approach to attract, engage, and retain social donors more effectively.

Prioritize ease and personalization

Donors today expect a frictionless giving experience—whether they're attending an event, participating in a peer-to-peer campaign, or contributing through giving days. Ease of donating remains a key motivator, with 84% of donors citing it as important. Incorporating mobile-friendly donation platforms, one-click giving options, and clear communication tailored to social donor preferences can help meet these expectations while ensuring donors feel connected to your mission.

Leverage social giving for long-term engagement

While social giving is often viewed as a one-time entry point, it can serve as a catalyst for deeper donor relationships. Event and auction attendees, occasion donors, and giving day participants all showed strong potential for becoming recurring donors. Invest in strategies that encourage repeat engagement, such as linking donations to specific projects, providing real-time updates on fundraising goals, and offering exclusive opportunities for loyal donors.

Harness the power of impact storytelling

This year's findings reaffirm the importance of communicating the tangible results of donor contributions. Testimonials from people directly benefiting from donations were rated as the most engaging feature by auction attendees. Incorporate powerful storytelling across all donor touchpoints—from emails to event programs—to show how their generosity is making a real difference. Remember to fully inform and gain consent from your beneficiaries who provide testimonials.

Embrace inclusivity and reach a broader audience

Younger and more diverse donors are playing a growing role in social giving. They're more likely to be motivated by urgent issues and nonprofits demonstrating innovation. Tailor your campaigns to include their perspectives and participation preferences and ensure that your events and giving opportunities are inclusive and welcoming. Highlight your organization's adaptability and leverage digital wallets and mobile giving options, which are particularly popular among younger donors.

By aligning your fundraising strategy with these insights, you can create more meaningful connections with today's social donors, helping your nonprofit not only attract new supporters but foster long-lasting relationships.



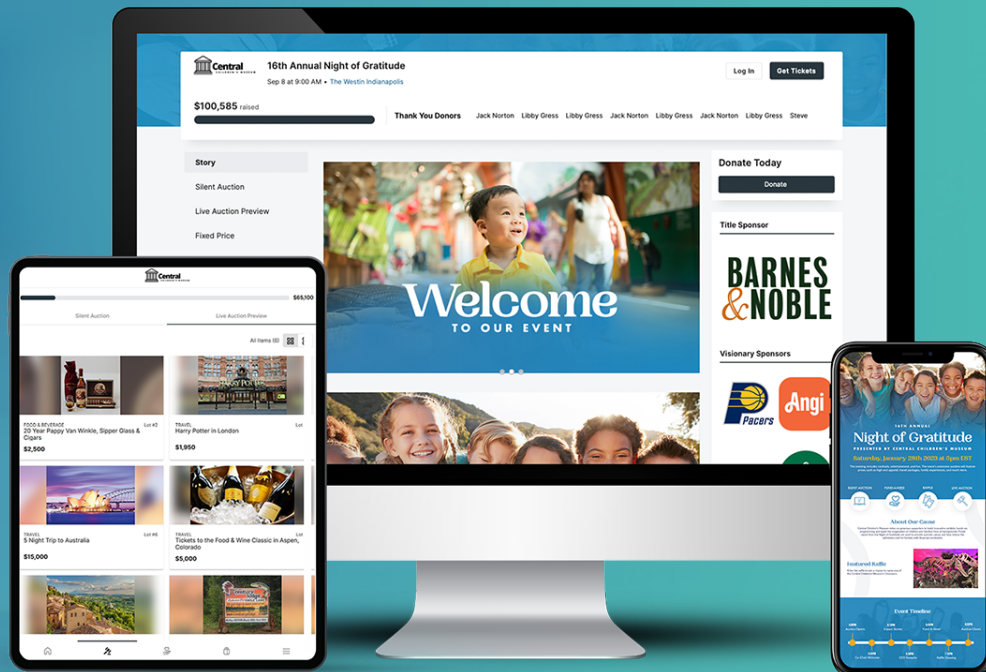
Survey methodology

The online survey of 1,036 social donors aged 18 or older was conducted by Edge Research between June 26 and July 19, 2024. Social donors are defined as anyone who self-reports giving to at least one charitable organization by attending a fundraising event or auction; participating or sponsoring someone in a fundraising activity like a run, walk, or ride; or donating or requesting donations for an occasion, challenge, or giving month or day within in the last 12 months. Data is self-reported, not transactional. Edge Research worked with an established industry sampling partner, consisting of opt-in research participants. This is a non-probability/convenience sample. Quotas were set to ensure incoming data (prior to screening for charitable donations) was census representative in terms of age, gender, region, and race/ethnicity.

About Bonterra

Bonterra is the only solutions network built to connect nonprofits and funders across the social good ecosystem. Supporting more than 180,000 organizations and facilitating over \$28B in annual giving, Bonterra helps nonprofits, volunteers, funders, corporate partners, and public agencies turn data into action and amplify impact across fundraising, including auctions and events. As the technology leader advancing the effort raise charitable giving to 3% of U.S. GDP by 2033, Bonterra combines trusted platforms, ethical AI, and continuous innovation to power the next era of good.

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